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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 3 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia concerning the ongoing acts of vandalism towards Georgian cultural and religious monuments in the occupied territory of Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 3 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia over the ongoing acts of vandalism towards Georgian cultural and religious monuments in the occupied territory of Abkhazia, Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses its grave concern over the ongoing acts of vandalism towards Georgian cultural and religious monuments in the occupied territories of Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Notably, one of the most precious monuments of Georgian cultural heritage, the eleventh century Ilori St. George Church, located in Abkhazia, Georgia, has completely lost its authenticity after the so-called rehabilitation works. Such works have resulted in the obliteration of all the characteristic features of the traditional Georgian architecture, reshaping it after the Russian architectural model. This has been done by adding a so-called "onion shaped" dome to the building, a typical Russian architectural detail. The front walls, including the eastern side of the church, which featured five Georgian lapidary inscriptions, have been painted in white, lined with red colour arches, as well as other architectural profiles, alien to Georgian architecture.

In addition, the so-called rehabilitation works are also under way for the New-Athos Monastery. Furthermore, according to the so-called State Information Agency of the proxy regime in Abkhazia, it is planned to announce a tender for restoration works aimed at rehabilitating Orthodox Churches on the territory of Abkhazia. Plans are being made to coordinate the activities of the Russian funds, public sector and individuals who might be involved in such activities. Illegal agreements, such as the one dated 16 October 2010, signed between the so-called Ministry of Culture of the "Republic of Abkhazia" and the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, in the field of preservation, examination, popularization and state protection of historical and cultural monuments, and a similar document dated 25 October 2010, signed between Russia and the proxy regime of the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia, Georgia, serve as the bases for such works.

However, taking into consideration the true intentions of the proxy regimes and their mentors towards the historic monuments on Georgian occupied territories, as exemplified by the case described above, we have grounded suspicion that under the guise of safeguarding the cultural monuments, we will ultimately witness a dramatic and deliberate destruction of Georgian cultural heritage on the occupied territories. The aforesaid is a merciless continuation of the policy of ethnic cleansing of Georgians aimed at eradicating the signs of Georgian presence on the occupied territories.

It should be noted that, with these acts, Russia is violating international law, including the obligations assumed under International Humanitarian Law, particularly the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict — 1954, which condemns the State parties for damaging and

destroying historic and cultural heritage, while in the case of occupation obliges State parties to the Convention to take all appropriate measures to conduct their activities in such a manner as to protect cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses its deep concern over the actions of the proxy regimes and the Russian Federation and calls upon the international community, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other international organizations to employ all the instruments at their disposal to halt the deliberate destruction of Georgian cultural and historical heritage.

Tbilisi, 22 November 2010